



RECORDS MANAGEMENT ADVICE

Basics of Records Management:

Preparing State Agency Schedules for Submission

Purpose: Provide guidance to state government agencies on the process for preparing and submitting agency schedules to the Records Management Division for approval.

Records retention schedules serve as an agency's authority to retain and purge records and, therefore, hold great importance. Schedules capture all types of records created and used by the agency in the course of its business and indicate how long these records are required to be retained. Both development and implementation of a retention schedule are important elements in establishing a "good faith" effort for ensuring proper records management practices by all employees.

Your agency needs to know how long to retain its records and what to do with them afterward; to destroy or preserve as archival. Records retention scheduling organizes your agency's records into series and sets a retention period and disposition for each series.

- **Determining Retention Periods** - Determining the appropriate retention and disposition for records requires taking a look at their value to the creating agency and their long-term value to the public. Some specific questions to ask when deciding how long to retain your records are:
 - **Administrative use:** What is the value of the records in carrying out the daily functions of your agency? *Day-to-day business operations, such as correspondence, memos, and reports (are typically retained for five years or less).*
 - **Legal requirements:** Are there any state statutes or federal regulations involved? *Some record retention schedules are mandated by law or regulation, such as records needed as evidence in legal cases or leases, titles, contracts, and court case files.*
 - **Fiscal requirements:** How much time must you allow for the completion of fiscal activities such as audit or budget? *Records documenting an agency's fiscal responsibilities, such as invoices, receipts, and purchase orders (are typically retained for seven years).*
 - **Historical/archival:** Do these records document important events or the history and development of your department? *Such records would include significant (public) historical/research records documenting agency history, such as board minutes, executive policy and correspondence.*
- **Schedule Process** – The agency (Records Officer) submits the appropriate forms to Records Management for formal review and final approval/adoption by the Maine State Archives. This is considered an agreed to contract between the submitting agency and the Archives.
- **Schedule Review/Revisions** – After schedules have been approved by the Maine State Archives, agencies may need to amend them for various reasons. Agency schedules should be reviewed every two years to ensure proper retention and current management practices of records.

To obtain more information on preparing state agency schedules, including required forms, visit our website at: <http://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/records/state/statetraining.html>.

“The right record, to the right person, at the right time, at the lowest possible cost”